

## Wastelands

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Summary: Eli and his brother decide to explore the wastelands and learn the hard way why it is so forbidden to enter. Contains discipline of minors. Please do not read if you do not like. (I do not own the setting or the creatures in this story, only the characters I have created to live in it.)

## Wastelands

We were forbidden to go into the wastelands without escort â€" FORBIDDEN. We both knew this, but the allure of stepping out into the unknown was just too much sometimes, especially for two overly adventurous lads anxious to prove themselves worthy to their peers and the Guardian's of Silver Peak.

Father and our older Brother Adam were away on temple business along with the other Guardians and would be gone a fortnight, possibly longer, which presented the perfect opportunity to go and get back without anyone ever knowing. Well, everyone except for Mother of course, but we could handle her. She would be so happy to see us return that she would focus more on the fact that we were home safe and sound than on the wrong we did. This she would pass onto our Father as all consequences for wrong doings were passed onto him. 'It's not a Mothers place' she would say, but even this we thought we could avoid with days of nonstop pleading and begging her not to tell. She would resist at first, but then we would remind her how severely we would be punished if Father ever found out and then we would swear to her an oath never to do such a thing ever again. Maybe we could even suggest that she punish us in some way.

"Perhaps I will suggest bed with no supper or something of that nature as being away from home in the wastelands at night, scared and lonely without our Mother will surely be punishment enough."

I laughed when my brother said this for two reasons - One because he actually sounded quite convincing and two because for him it would probably actually work. He had been sickly as a baby and though he was fourteen now and as healthy as a horse my Mother still treated

him as such - always mollycoddling him like some infant " if anyone could get away with something like this, it would be he. So, I agreed.

Worst mistake I ever made in my life. The wastelands were horrible - barren, bleak, dead, desolate, deserted " and many other adjectives I didn't know. After only one hour in that horrid place I wanted to go home " especially when it got dark. We had lit a fire, but that only illuminated every creeping, crawling thing all the more. I was so scared. I couldn't wait for the night mare to be over, little did I know, it was just about to begin.

I had just closed my eyes when I heard something in the distance. I sat up and looked at my Brother. He too was sitting up.

"What was that?" I asked Daniel.

"I don't know." He said as he listened more intently as the sound grew nearer. "It sounds like running."

Fear seized me suddenly when I realized he was correct. It was the sound of running and it was heading straight for us and now snarling. We both leaped to our feet.

"Get the horses!" Daniel shouted. "Hurry!"

I ran over and grabbed the reins as instructed. Both horses were wide eyed and terrified. "Come Abacus, come Rain." I said sternly and pulled them closer to the fire where Daniel was standing with a long branch in the flames. Once the branch was alight he ran over to the make shift enclosure we had made from the fallen dead trees and lit them on fire.

"What are you going?!" I shouted at him as the flames enclosed us in a circle of heat and light.

"Stay in the center!" He shouted at me, and I did holding both horses tightly in my grasp.

When the circle of flames was complete, Daniel ran to the center and stood next to me as I looked out into the darkness for whatever was coming. That's when I caught something out of the corner of my eye. I whipped my head in that direction and there was a large, long fanged, hideous creature the size of a grown man snarling at us from the other side of the flames.

Father had told us tales of horrid nocturnal creatures mad with the thirst for human blood and flesh, but until now I had always thought them tall tales used to deter us from exploring the wastelands - little did I know. "Do you see that?!" I shouted at my Brother.

"I see it." He shouted back. "It won't cross the flames! Just stay in the center!"

When we were looking for a camp site we decided on a grove of dead trees which had mostly fallen except for one or two. "It saves us from having to search for fire wood for one and two we can move a few of the fallen trees and make a small enclosure for the horses." Daniel had said with a smile. He was always thinking, thank the Gods. Had we not done so, I was sure we'd be dead.

Most of the trees surrounding us were large enough to stay alight on their own for some time, but the smaller ones were burning away too quickly and so we had to keep feeding the flames to keep them going all night. The plan was to take turns watching and putting logs on the fire, but there was no way either of us could sleep - especially after three more of those creatures showed up and began to surround us " so we both stayed awake and waited for daylight.

I was never so happy to see the sunrise in my whole twelve years of life. I think Daniel felt the same by the relieved look on his face. He actually drew in a deep breath and sighed when the sun light came over the mountain and touched his face. The creatures had been gone an hour or so, but neither of us wanted to move too soon in case there were a few stragglers out there lurking.

"We need to get out of here as fast as we can Eli." He told me.

He didn't have to tell me twice. He didn't have to tell me once. I was already tethering my bed roll to the back of my saddle. Three minutes later we were on our horses moving quickly toward home.

We were pretty quiet as we traveled " both deep in thought as to what we had experienced the night before. "What do you think they were?" I asked Daniel.

"I don't know. Vampires I suppose."

"Vampires'!?" I said looking terrified suddenly. "Real vampires'!?"

"Yes, the kind that sneak into little boy's chambers at night and sucks their blood while they sleep." He said looking very serious, terrifying me even more. Then he burst out laughing. "By the Gods Eli, you should see the look on your face. Don't be such a baby. There is no such thing as Vampires." He said, though I'm not so sure he believed that any longer.

I certainly didn't believe that any longer, but I didn't argue with him. Perhaps they really weren't Vampires at all. I mean I did have a tendency to allow my imagination to run away with me. Perhaps I was now. Then again perhaps not. In any case I decided to change the subject. Daniel looked relieved.

"Do you think we will get home before dark?"

"We should as long as we don't dawdle." He said and I agreed.

We stopped once, but only long enough to relieve ourselves and then it was back on the road towards home. It was late afternoon, early evening by the time we reached the spring just outside Silver Peak. The last fresh water you will find before entering the vast wastelands. We were happy to see it. It meant we were almost home.

I leaped off of Abacus and threw myself down on the water's edge to get a much needed drink of the delicious water. Abacus followed suit. I could hear him sucking it in beside me. "I never thought water could taste so good." I said looking at Daniel who I noticed had gone rigged and stiff suddenly. "What's the matter?" I asked as I looked in the direction he was starring. My heart stopp

"Father." Daniel said.

I leaped to my feet and started to run.

"Get him!" My Father shouted to my older Brother Adam, but he had already reacted. I could hear the pounding of his feet hitting the ground behind me as I ran back towards the wastelands "Vampires be damned.

I didn't get too far before I felt his grip on my arm and I was jerked off my feet and tucked under his arm. "Put me down!" I demanded. "Stop it!"

"Do not bark orders at me runt!" He said. "You're in enough trouble as it is."

By the time Adam and I got back to the water's edge, Daniel was lying in the grass, face down and bare assed, with our Father's knee pressed into the small of his back as he worked to remove the wide leather belt at his waist.

"I'm sorry Father!" He was shouting. "I'm sorry!"

"You will be." Our Father growled as he ripped the belt off, making a God awful sound that sent a chill up my spine. A second later he doubled the thing over in his fist and brought it down, hard.

Daniel screamed as the leather connected, over and over, leaving hot angry stripes across his bare skin. It was pretty hard to watch - especially knowing I'd be next. I kept trying to pull away, but Adam made me stand there and wait.

I was in tears by the time my Father got off my Brother and reached for me. Straight away he got down on one knee and grabbed the front of my trousers and began to unbutton them. "Please Father, It wasn't my idea." I pleaded as I tried to stop him, but he slapped my hand away.

"It matters not as you still went where you were forbidden!" He shouted as he yanked my pants down and tossed me over his bent knee and proceeded to strap me like he did my Brother.

I got seven licks - which felt more like seven hundred - then I was let up. Immediately I crumpled to the ground and tried to rub the flames out, but nothing short of sitting in the cool water from the spring was going to put out that fire.

"You know you are forbidden - what in the devil were you thinking?!" My Father shouted as I lay there sobbing.

"We just wanted to see it." Daniel spoke up.

"The only thing you will see by going into the Wastelands alone is your death. Do you not realize that? Do you not know what could have happened to you?"

Daniel shifted his eyes to me and gave me a look as if silently warning me not to breathe one word of the blood thirsty mutants we nearly had to set ourselves on fire to avoid. I agreed nothing good

would have come of it, so I kept silent.

End  
file.